

BARRE GAZETTE

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Barre Year in Review

Pandemic was top news

By Ellenor Downer
Staff Writer

BARRE – The big event in 2020 was the COVID-19 pandemic. It came to a head mid-March when federal, state and local governments declared a state of emergency. Governor Charlie Baker activated up to 2,000 Massachusetts National Guard members to assist with the State of Emergency declared March 10 as the region continues to respond to the spread of the coronavirus.

Quabbin Regional School District Superintendent Sheila Muir said at the March 12 school committee meeting, “Things are changing by the hour, even the minute.” She said the district stopped all outside trips, domestic and international, stopped use of schools for outside events and staff deep cleaned all buildings over the past weekend. At the March 12 meeting, six school districts decided to close schools for varying time periods to do deep cleaning. The next day the Quabbin Regional School joined a long list of schools closed in the Commonwealth.

January

Quabbin Regional High School band director, Peter Lewis, took to his training bike to help raise funds for the band trip to Washington, D.C. Jan. 4 he clocked 155 miles and rode at an average speed of 18.6 miles per hour consistently for 8 hours and 56 minutes. Former state Senator Stephen Brewer presented selectmen with a \$7,000 check that included \$5,000 for the 911 Memorial Fund and \$2,000 for improvements to Barre Common. Fidelity Bank established the \$1.5 million Barre Savings Charitable Foundation endowment when it merged with Barre Savings Bank. Jan. 12 the Quabbin High School Alumni Band performed its annual concert in the auditorium at the high school. Making the commitment to participate in this weekend takes some planning. Current Quabbin district band director, Peter Lewis, schedules three days



Turley Publications File Photos

The Barre Lions Club helped install new lights at Nornay Park in South Barre.

of band rehearsals beginning with a three hour session on Friday evening, an entire day on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and a brush up rehearsal on Sunday before the grand finale of the afternoon concert.

Town employees held an open house for Andrew Golas, town administrator, Wednesday, Jan. 22 from 1-5 p.m. at the Henry Woods Building. Golas took a position as town administrator for the town of Charlton. The town of Barre was one of 24 communities in the state to become an age and dementia friendly community. Patty Sullivan of the Massachusetts Council on Aging attended the Tuesday, Jan. 21 selectmen’s meeting to present the town with a certificate of recognition. Selectmen appointed Heather Budrewicz to the interim town administrator position. Brudewicz had ten years of experience in town administration.

February

The Quabbin Regional School District budget subcommittee chair presented a preliminary budget,

2020



Barre held an outdoor Special Town Meeting in the Quabbin Regional High School parking lot Saturday, Nov. 21.



The Barre Farmers Market was held from May to October on the Barre Common.

which was “bare bones” and was a \$1.8 million or 5.3% increase from last year. Wigler told the full QRSD Committee that increases included technology and retirement. Six unites are up for collective bargaining this year. On the recommendation of Cheryl Duval, director of administrative services, the school committee voted to no longer charge tuition to regular students in the in the preschool located at

Ruggles Lane School. Last week, the All Things Irish selection committee met and selected recipients. They included Lucy Allen, Dennis Dextradeur, Ellenor Downer, Charles Fullam, Fred and Becki Hamel, Sandra Hood, Kathlyn Inman, the Leander family, Doug Martin, Stanley Miknaitis, Guido and Helene (Carroll) Pascale, Joe Petracone, Joseph and Linda Rogowski, Patrick Swain and Mary

Ann Watson. Feb. 23 the Superior Court held a restitution hearing and Judge Janet Kento-Walker ordered former Barre tax collector Marcia Langelier to pay the town \$100 per month during her probation period. She also had to forfeit her contribution to Worcester Regional Retirement Board of \$30,495 to the town of Barre. Due to her job related convictions she forfeited her pension. The QRSD Committee voted to lower the FY 21 budget Thursday, Feb. 27 of \$36,023,026 or 3.4% less than the first proposal of 5.3%.

March

Q-DRUG sponsored Go Purple for Substance Use Prevention March 2 through 7. “All Things Irish” happened Saturday, March 7 at American Legion Post 2. Proceeds from evening supported the Polus Center’s “Bridge to Success Project.” Quabbin NJROTC held its annual ball March 7. For the sixth year, a “Lock Down” at the high school

See BARRE YIR, page 5

School switches to all remote

Winter sports postponed to Jan. 4

By Paula Ouimette
Staff writer

NORTH BROOKFIELD – During the Dec. 21 School Committee meeting, School Superintendent Richard Lind discussed the decision to switch to all remote learning beginning the week of Dec. 21, due to the increase in close contact and COVID-19 cases. He said the district had three COVID-positive students in the school at the time of the meeting, and some of them did not find out they were positive until after they had been inside the school buildings. There were 15 staff members at one time in close contact with a COVID-positive person. Lind said the number of staff affected impacted supervision within the school.

None of the COVID-positive students contracted the virus from the school. Lind said he had hoped to avoid going remote until vacation, but that it was no longer safe to remain physically in the schools. School Committee Chair Maria Tucker said the schools have done a great job to make it to this point without going remote. Lind said they are hoping to be back in-person on Jan. 4.

Lind said they will only have remote learning on snow days when they have enough time to prepare. He said if they get an unexpected snow day, it will simply be a snow day, as teachers and parents would not have ample time to plan for it.

Winter sports

Lind asked the School Committee for support when it came to approving winter sports, which would be basketball in North Brookfield. Lind said he will postpone winter athletics until Jan. 4. Tucker said she was sure it is disappointing for the students who love basketball, but she hopes they will have another opportunity in

See NB SCHOOLS, page 6

New Braintree man charged with armed home invasion

GILBERTVILLE – A 41-year-old New Braintree man was arrested and charged with home invasion after he used a gun on an 81-year-old resident to enter a home on Church Street the day after Christmas.

On Saturday, Dec. 26, around 2:30 p.m., Hardwick/New Braintree Police were advised an armed home invasion that had just occurred. Officers responded to an address on Church Street in Hardwick’s Gilbertville section where it was reported that an 81-year-old male party was the victim of armed home invasion.

A male party knocked on the door, when the victim answered the door, the male party allegedly forced resident back into his residence at gunpoint, and took cash from the resident. The suspect fled the resi-

dence and the Hardwick/New Braintree police were notified. During the police investigation, a possible suspect was identified. While obtaining that information, Paxton Police Department made a motor vehicle stop and the suspect was arrested on an outstanding arrest warrant from Worcester District Court.

Timothy Flores, of Old Wine Road, New Braintree, was charged with home invasion, armed assault on someone 60 or older, assault and battery on someone 60 or older and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon on someone 60 or older.

Police said still an active investigation at this time, and anyone with information is asked to please contact Corporal Robert Toupin at 413-477-6708, ext. 110. Flores was arraigned in East Brookfield District Court on Monday, Dec. 28, and is being held until Jan. 4, until a dangerousness hearing can be held

School Committee votes to retire school mascot

By Paula Ouimette
Staff Writer

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The School Committee unanimously approved retiring the district’s Indian mascot and team name at its meeting on Dec. 21.

School Superintendent Richard Lind discussed the process the School Committee has gone through since receiving communication over the summer asking the district to consider changing its mascot, the Indian. He said they had a panel of indigenous speakers present an information session in November and reached out to the community for feedback. Lind said looked over all the information available and decided to ask the School Committee that they vote “to retire the current Indian nickname and logo. I understand that this is an emotional issue for a lot of people and some

will be disappointed and some will be happy, but my recommendation lies in the fact that our role, my role, as an educator is to create an environment that is safe for all members of our community, and it is clear from the research and the feedback from our Native American panel that indicates that these nicknames, logos and mascots don’t create a safe environment.”

School Committee Secretary Elisabeth Melad said the discussion to change the mascot was initiated by the wider North Brookfield community, and she thanked Lind and School Committee Chair Maria Tucker for respecting the process to get to this point. She also thanked the panel of speakers that spoke last month saying, “at the end of the day, those are the voices that I think

See MASCOT RETIRED, page 6

Christmas rains cause flooding



Turley Publications Photo by Ellenor Downer

Rain on Christmas Day caused flooding in the area. This picture was taken at Barre Falls Dam.



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News of the Towns



Round Town
Ellenor Downer
413-967-3505

Library offers curbside pickup

Woods Memorial Library became the first library in the C/W MARS Network to enable its new Curbside Pickup feature, which allows patrons to make appointments from their library accounts. For patrons who usually receive automated email and text hold notifications, those were also re-enabled on that day. To use the new feature, place holds online at catalog.cwmars.org or by contacting the library via phone or email. As soon as the hold becomes available at the library, the patron will receive an automated email or text notification, as well as a second email or text with a link to make an appointment. Those who do not receive these notices will continue to be notified by phone. Follow the link to schedule an appointment during one of the available dates and times.

Patrons will be redirected to log into their account first. They can also add notes, update and cancel appointments on this page. When the patrons arrive at the library during their designated time, they can click “Alert staff of your arrival” from their account on their mobile device. The button will not be active until their appointment time. Items will be checked out to patrons when they are picked up. Checkout receipts will be emailed automatically, although they may request a printed copy. Patrons must make an appointment through the catalog, by phone or by email in order to pick up material. The library cannot serve people without an appointment.

For step-by-step instructions on how to use this new feature or for detailed instructions on the library’s outdoor service procedures, people may contact the library by phone at 978-355-2533, email at barrelibrary@gmail.com or visit our website, www.barrelibrary.org.

EQLT to host Jan. 1 walk/ski

HARDWICK – East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT), 120 Ridge Road, will host a New Year’s Day, Friday, Jan. 1, walk/ski on the Rail Trail beginning at noon. They will meet at the Rail Trail, located at 1700 Hardwick Road, in New Braintree at noon.

Masks and social distancing required. Leashed dogs are welcome. The event will be held rain or shine unless there’s a blizzard. People should RSVP to EQLT at EQLT@comcast.net or 413-477-8229.

MOC distributes toy to needy families

FITCHBURG – Making Opportunity Count held their annual Toys for Tots distribution event on Dec. 21-23 to ensure more than 1,000 children throughout North Central Mass. can experience the joy of opening presents this holiday season.

The organization partnered with the local Toys for Tots chapter, as they do each year, to fulfill the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve’s mission to bring hope to economically disadvantaged children. However, MOC’s work with low-income families, who have been hit hard by the pandemic led to its decision to supplement the Toys for Tots program with an additional toy drive this year to support families that may have missed the Toys for Tots deadline or have children over the age of 13, a cutoff for the official Toys for Tots program. The agency predicted a higher number of parents seeking help than previous years, and was proven correct as they distributed toys to nearly 350 families, about 200 more than in 2019.

The event showcased the community’s support for each other during this time. Donations from local businesses and individuals were among the highest the agency received in 2020, second only to their March request for Covid-19 emergency response. The donations were used to directly purchase toys that could not be fulfilled by the Toys for Tots program. Nearly 50 volunteers supported the toy distribution - spending evenings and weekends organizing and packing toys for families. Half of those volunteers were students from St. Bernard’s High School, which donated its space for one of the agency’s distribution events and raised funds for gift wrapping supplies.

“Local families have really been struggling through this pandemic, especially those we serve,” stated Kevin Reed, MOC executive director. “We’re grateful that we could



Turley Publications Courtesy Photos
Santa is shown by a Toys for Tots collection.

deliver some joy to children and relief to parents who need it most right now. We couldn’t do it without the help of the community and the generosity of partners like St. Bernard’s High School.”

The event looked different than previous years as it moved to a contactless, drive-through system to comply with social distancing and adherence to Covid-19 guidelines. Participants remained in their vehicles while MOC staff and volunteers loaded their trunks with presents for children along with gift wrapping supplies. MOC also kept shelf-stable food on hand, as they fielded unexpected requests from families for food. Staff reported that many families shared personal stories with them that illustrated just how difficult this past year has been due to unemployment, school interruptions, and illness.

“In past years, this is the season I would be donating to

charities,” shared Jessica B., a local mother that participated in the Toys for Tots event. “I never imagined I would be the recipient myself, but 2020 has turned our lives upside down. I am so grateful there are community resources like Toys for Tots to make things a little easier.”

Making Opportunity Count, Inc. (MOC) was established in 1966 for the primary purpose of promoting the well-being of low-income people in the cities and towns of North Central Massachusetts. The MOC service area encompasses 30 cities and towns (Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Barre, Berlin, Bolton, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Hardwick, Harvard, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Littleton, Lunenburg, New Braintree, Pepperell, Petersham, Phillipston, Princeton, Royalston, Sterling, Shirley, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster, and Winchendon).

Hubbardston
Ellenor Downer
edowner@turley.com



Hubbardston has 13 COVID cases

Hubbardston is a “Green” community according to the Dec. 24 MA DPH COVID-19 report. This means Hubbardston has less than 15 active cases, but more than 10. The current number of active cases in town is 13. This is a lower risk level than last week’s report as Hubbardston saw a decline in active COVID-19 cases.

Medicare Savings program

The Massachusetts Medicare Savings Program pays your monthly Part B Premium, \$148.50 for 2021, and people may be eligible for significant assistance in paying their Medicare costs. They will also be eligible for Extra Help from Social Security to help pay their prescription drug costs. The income eligibility for a single person is \$1,755 and for a married couple \$2,371. Asset limits are \$15,720 single and \$23,600 for a married couple.

Medicare Advantage Plan enrollment

This period will run from Jan. 1 to March 31 of each year. During this timeframe, people can change to another Medicare Advantage Plan (HMO or PPO plans). They can also leave their Medicare Advantage Plan and return to Original Medicare and pick up a drug plan and supplement coverage. People must be in a Medicare Advantage Plan on Jan. 1 to take advantage of this. SHINE counselors are available to discuss Medicare questions or concerns. People may contact their SHINE counselor by phoning their local senior center.

Senior center activities

The Hubbardston Senior Center continues to slowly open. The senior center has space limitations, only 10 people allowed in the building at a time. Monday and Wednesday mornings Coffee With Friends is from 9 to 11 a.m. On Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9 to 11 a.m. is the Walking Club. Due to space limitations, please call to register for any of the activities below: Bingo: Monday 12-3 p.m. call Flo 978-928-5113 to register. Meals on Wheels: Call the Senior Center 978-928-1400 extension 211. Food delivery is on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Thursday is drive thru for food and eggs is 9:30 a.m. to noon. This schedule is subject to change due to COVID restrictions.

Barre Dining Center

BARRE — Elder Services of Worcester Area Nutrition Program welcomes guests to dine at the Barre Senior Center, 557 South Barre Road. The following meals will be served for the week of Jan. 4.

Meal sites are closed and there are only Meals on Wheels deliveries.

Volunteers are needed at the Barre dining site. Volunteers are needed for Meals on Wheels (mileage reimbursement) and in the kitchen. People should contact 978-355-5027.

MON. – Swedish meatballs, garlic mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, fresh fruit, pumpernickel bread

TUES. – Garlic herbed chicken, cornbread stuffing, roasted broccoli, Lorna Doones, whole wheat bread

WED. – Stuffed pepper casserole, mashed potatoes, carrots, vanilla pudding, diet = diet vanilla pudding, peasant white bread

THURS. – Potato crunch fish, wild rice, mixed vegetables, tartar sauce, pineapple, marble rye bread

FRI. – Pork rib-i-que with BBQ sauce, mac ‘n cheese, green beans, fruited ambrosia, sandwich roll

*Diabetic friendly dessert

**Higher sodium entree

Meal includes milk and margarine. Menus are subject to change. All meals are served at about 11:45 a.m. each weekday. Reservations should be made the day before by calling 978-355-5027 before 10:30 a.m. The donation of \$2.50 per meal helps keep the program running.

Eagle Hill School

242 Old Petersham Road, Hardwick 01037 • 413-477-6000

HELP WANTED
OVERNIGHT AWAKE STAFF MEMBER

Eagle Hill School, a college-prep board school specializing in educating bright children with specific learning disabilities, seeks an Overnight Awake Staff Member to join our residential team. This part-time position requires a person to be dependable, caring, and responsible for assisting with assisting with program areas, the overnight safety of 200 boarding students and all buildings on a 200 acre campus. Hours: Friday-Sat. 7pm-3am. Pay: Hourly (commensurate with experience). Start immediately.

WEEKEND COUNSELOR

For the academic year running September – June, and summer program needs in July:
Hours: Friday: 3pm-11pm, Saturday: 9am-11pm, Sunday: 9am-5pm, Optional: Sunday 5pm – 8pm

A Weekend Counselor is responsible for enhancing the quality of life in the dorms as part of the Eagle Hill Student Life program. This includes fostering a cooperative and considerate residential learning community for all students. The position carries a wide range of duties, responsibilities and requires a high level of commitment of both time and effort. A Weekend Counselor plays a central role in building a residential community for the students

Responsibilities:

- Responsible for supporting the student body in their effort to generalize daily living skills.
- Responsible for the smooth operation of the dorm floor, Student Life program, safety and productivity for 15-20 students.
- To serve as a role model by demonstrating responsible behavior, integrity and good judgment.
- Collaborating with faculty serving a Student Life shift, to maintain an organized and consistent dorm floor.
- Enforce rules and ensure adherence to the Student Code of Conduct and dorm floor expectations.
- To listen and provide an empathetic ear and sound judgment by helping students come to their own conclusions about how to address problems.
- To take part in planning and supervising both on and off campus activity programming for students.
- To collaborate information and activities with weekday dorm counselors.
- To assume other responsibilities as assigned by the Director of Weekend Services.

Specific duties:

- Be available to reside overnight in the residence halls.
- To provide active leadership in a variety of activities throughout the Student Life program.
- As an information resource, a weekend counselor is expected to help students deal with conflicts by adopting impartial solutions to issues that arise. When necessary, weekend counselors will collaborate with Director of Weekend Services, Student Life administrators, and/or a student’s advisor.
- Attend appropriate training sessions when they arise.
- To complete all necessary reports and records needed for Eagle Hill School.
- Specifically, the entering of log notes pertaining to contributions to the community or interactions with students, both positive and negative.

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News of the Towns

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Note: Many meetings are closed to the public or will be held remotely.

BARRE

Board of Selectmen – Jan. 4 at 6:30 p.m.
Historical Commission – Jan. 4 at 7 p.m.
Board of Assessors – Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
Felton Field Commission – Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m.
Planning Board – Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
Council on Aging – Jan. 6 at 1 p.m.
Barre Housing Authority – Jan. 7 at 3 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 11 at 5 p.m.
Water Commission – Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
DPW Commission – Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
Conservation Committee – Jan. 12 at 7 p.m.
Library Trustees – Jan. 13 at 7 p.m.
Sewer Commission – Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.
Cable Advisory Committee – Feb. 9 at 7 p.m.

HARDWICK

Board of Selectmen – Jan. 4 at 6:30 p.m.
Recycling Commission – Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 7 at 6:30 p.m.
Paige Library Trustees – Jan. 7 at 7 p.m.
Gilbertville Public Library – Jan. 8 at 4 p.m.
Gilbertville-Wheelwright Sewer Commissioners – Jan. 11 at 6 p.m.
Planning Board – Jan. 12 at 6:30 p.m.
Council on Aging – Jan. 14 at 9:30 a.m.
Gilbertville Water District – Jan. 19 at 5:30 p.m.
Conservation Commission – Jan. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

HUBBARDSTON

Historic Commission – Jan. 2 at 10 a.m.
Board of Selectmen – Jan. 4 and Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
Conservation Commission – Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 6 at 10:30 a.m. and Jan. 12 at 6:30 p.m.
Planning Board – Jan. 7 at 6:30 p.m.
ZBA – Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
Open Space Committee – Jan. 26 at 7 p.m.

PETERSHAM

Open Space and Recreation Committee – Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m.
Conservation Commission – Jan. 5 at 7:30 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 7 and Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.
Council on Aging – Jan. 11 at 10 a.m.
Cemetery Commission – Jan. 14 at 7 p.m.
Petersham Historic District – Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.
Planning Board – Jan. 28 at 7 p.m.

RUTLAND

Conservation Commission Site Walk – Jan. 2 at 10 a.m.
Public Hearing – Jan. 11 at 6 p.m.
Cable Advisory Committee – Jan. 13 at 8 p.m.

Postponements and cancellations due to the coronavirus pandemic

Given the current surge in COVID cases in the state, and with an abundance of caution for the health and safety of the cast and crew, Theatre at the Mount's live stream production of Winter Wonderettes is cancelled.

The Three County Fair, Northhampton, closed its office for the winter season and instituted staff cuts and furloughs to help the 202-year-old organization survive the extended shutdown of the fairgrounds due to the COVID-19 health crisis. The cuts will affect each staff member, and includes a fourteen percent salary reduction for senior management and staggered furloughs for all employees. Furloughs could be extended if the fairgrounds are unable to host postponed 2020 events in the spring, which include over a dozen different horse shows from April through October, plus a variety of concerts and festivals. The Three County Fair entered 2020 on solid ground after completing 2019 as its most successful year since horse racing ended at the fairgrounds in 2005, thanks to a widely attended Labor Day weekend fair, and another full slate of horse shows and festivals. But with reoccurring operational expenses and more than one million dollars in lost 2020 event revenue, the fair will run out of reserves sooner rather than later. The fair received a Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Loan in mid-May, which has since been exhausted and forgiven by its lender and the SBA. For more information, people may visit www.3countyfair.com.

Corrections policy

The Barre Gazette will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on Page 2. To request a correction, send information to Editor Ellenor Downer at barrenews@turley.com or call 978-355-4000. Corrections may also be requested in writing at Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

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Barre Gazette

Star comes to Second Chance for life changing surgery

EAST BROOKFIELD – Second Chance Animal Services is asking for help for a very special shelter pet. Second Chance first learned about Star from one of their partners while making plans for a rescue air transport. This sweet four-year-old shepherd mix was sitting in an overcrowded Texas shelter for months, suffering from a debilitating condition. Star needs surgery for corneoid disease in her left elbow, which causes pain and lameness. The Texas shelter did not have the means to help her and time was running out.

“We knew that Second Chance could be her only chance,” said development director Lindsay Doray, “So we made plans to get her on a transport to Massachusetts as soon as we could.”

After Star was released from the Second Chance Almost Home facility, where rescue pets, who cross state lines come to rest and complete their state-mandated quarantine, Shelter Manager and Vet Tech Shauna Griffin took her to see a specialist, who confirmed the diagnosis.

Griffin reports, “We are keeping Star comfortable at the shelter where she’s become a favorite of staff and volunteers alike. The surgeon agreed it was best to keep her in her kennel with short walks to prevent further damage to the joint. She is just the sweetest dog; we’ve all fallen for her.”

Griffin will be taking Star



Turley Publications Courtesy Photo

Star resting in her kennel at the Second Chance Adoption Center; Star arriving in Massachusetts from Texas.

for arthroscopic surgery at the beginning of January with the hopes of repairing her elbow and relieving her pain. While Second Chance Community Veterinary Hospitals perform a wide range of surgeries on a daily basis, Star needs the help of a specialist. After the surgery, Star will return to the shelter to recuperate before she is available for adoption.

With an estimate of \$3,500 for the surgery alone, Second Chance has begun raising funds to help Star. Those interested in making a donation to help can do so through a special fundraiser on the Second Chance Facebook page, by making a donation at www.secondchanceanimals.org or via mail to Second Chance Animal Services, PO

Box 136, East Brookfield, MA 01515.

Second Chance is a non-profit 501c3 tax exempt organization that began in 1999 in East Brookfield and relies solely on donations from grants to operate. The organization operates an adoption center in East Brookfield, Community Veterinary Hospitals in North Brookfield, Springfield, and Worcester. Second Chance helps over 40,000 pets a year through adoption, spay/neuter, veterinary care, community outreach, educational outreach programs, training, and a pet food pantry. For more information, people may visit Second Chance’s website at www.secondchanceanimals.org.

Bigelow Library lists upcoming events

CLINTON – Even during

the pandemic, the Bigelow Free Public Library, 54 Walnut St., is here to help. The library still provides library loans (order online with the pick-up location as “Clinton” or call a library staff member for help keeping safety first in mind with curbside pick-up provided from the library “Book Shack.” Discount museum passes are still available for access to the museums and parks, which have opened to the general public. The library continues to provide wonderful programs to patrons of all ages, just check out the library calendar at <http://bigelowlibrary.org/calendar/> for the list of upcoming events and how to register.

The library is now providing access to the library’s technology computers, printers and faxes and collections by limited, appointment-only access with strict social distancing guidelines in place for

everyone’s safety.

Wednesday, Jan. 6 at 6:30 a.m. there will be a film viewing and group discussion “Race Relations Through the Other Lens” (part 1) with group moderator Janet Parnes - Zoom Presentation

People may participate for a viewing of the first part of the film “Race Relations Through the Other Lens” and for a moderated group discussion after the film viewing lead by Janet Parnes.

People may register at <http://bigelowlibrary.org/calendar/> to receive the Zoom meeting invitation.

Wednesday, Jan. 20 at 6:30 p.m. there will be a wicked good henna workshop with Mandy Roberge (part 1)-Zoom presentation. The first part in a two-part henna workshop lead by Mandy Roberge. In this first part, participants will be learning how to mix their own henna paste and will

also learn about the culture and history of this ancient and beautiful art form. Registrants will receive all the materials needed to create their own henna paste. People may register at <http://bigelowlibrary.org/calendar/> to receive the Zoom meeting invitation and their supplies for the workshop.

Thursday, Jan. 21 at 6:30 p.m. there will be a wicked good henna workshop with Mandy Roberge (part 2)-Zoom Presentation. In this session, participants will be checking on the dye release of their henna and will learn how to “cone up” and practice application techniques as well as applying henna.

People may register at <http://bigelowlibrary.org/calendar/> to receive the Zoom meeting invitation.

People may contact the Bigelow Free Public Library at 978-365-4061 or mfournier@cwmar.org.

FEMA approves nearly \$38 million for Massachusetts COVID-19 costs

REGION – Massachusetts will receive \$37,821,788 from FEMA to reimburse costs incurred by The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for five Alternate Care Sites to ensure hospital capacity in the wake of COVID-19 during the spring of 2020.

The sites include: Partners Healthcare/Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, UMass Memorial Health Care/DCU Center in Worcester, Cape Cod Healthcare/Joint Base Cape Cod, Southcoast Health System/University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Tripp Athletic Center, and Lowell General Hospital/University of Massachusetts Lowell Recreation Center. These Alternate Care Sites (ACS) supplemented the state health-care system by providing additional bed space when pandemic

ic projections exceeded hospital capacity. Additionally, MEMA provided the facilities with shelter materials, utilities, staff services and access to and removal of potable water. Reimbursement requests for costs incurred by the clinical partners will be made separately to FEMA in the coming weeks.

This grant is funded through FEMA’s Public Assistance (PA) Grant program, which reimburses communities for actions taken in the immediate response and during recovery from a disaster. Eligible applicants include states, federally recognized tribal governments, U.S. territories, local governments, and certain private non-profit organizations. The grant applications are submitted from the state, which coordinates the process with local governments.

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Oakham

Ellenor Downer

edowner@turley.com



Family Sunday is Jan. 3

Sunday, Jan. 3 the Oakham Congregational Church will hold its 10 a.m. worship service in the church sanctuary. Communion and Family Sunday will be held Sunday, Jan. 3. There is no Sunday School on Jan. 3. People should wear a mask and practice social distancing in the sanctuary. Sunday School will resume Sunday, Jan. 10 and is held downstairs in Fellowship Hall.

Country Bank supports food pantries with \$130,000 donations

WARE/SPRINGFIELD/WORCESTER – Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving central and western Massachusetts, donated over \$130,000 to local food pantries throughout the year to assist with supplying food to its communities. The Greater Boston Food Bank recently reported that food insecurities in Massachusetts reached an all-time high in November. The state has experienced a 59% increase since 2018, representing more than 1 million people in need of food assistance. Most people are using food pantries for the first time. Food insecurity is projected to increase to 81% for children, making Massachusetts the second-highest percentage change in the country.

As part of Country Bank’s “Season of Giving Campaign,” it donated additional funds to the Food Bank of Western Mass. and the Worcester County Food Bank. The donation was to honor its banking customers and partners in place of traditional holiday gifts. “This was such a great idea and so wonderful to help others at this difficult time,” stated Therese Rakouskas, owner of Five Star Gardens in Palmer.

“We’re so grateful to Country Bank for its social investment of \$20,000 in The Food Bank’s mission to feed our neighbors in need at this critical time. With this support, we’ll be able to provide 40,000 meals to households struggling to make ends meet and put healthy food on the table. For every dollar donated, we provide the equivalent of four meals,” stated Andrew Morehouse, executive director of The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

“The pandemic has undoubtedly placed a strain on our local food pantries. As a community partner, we are fully committed to helping those in need throughout this pandemic,” stated Jodie Gerulaitis, vice president, community relations at Country Bank.

To learn more about how people can help or if they need assistance, they may visit www.foodbankwma.org, <https://foodbank.org/> or www.feedingamerica.org.

Country Bank is a full-service mutual community bank serving central and western Massachusetts with 14 offices in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Brimfield, Belchertown, Wilbraham, Ludlow, Leicester, Paxton, Charlton and Worcester.

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Opinion

Guest Column

Will my U.K. pension affect my Social Security?

By Russell Gloor
Guest columnist

Dear Rusty: I lived and worked in the United Kingdom prior to coming to the U.S. at age 45, which qualified me for a U.K. State Pension worth the equivalent of about \$740 U.S. dollars per month. Since moving to the U.S. I have contributed to the U.S. Social Security system for 14 years and my estimated U.S. Social Security benefit is \$1,643 per month. I have heard about something called “WEP” and must be honest and say I don’t fully understand. Can you provide some advice or references so I can understand what happens to these sums when I retire? I don’t have any other pension income, so understanding these numbers is important. FYI, I hold both U.S. and U.K. passports and will retire in the U.S.A. Signed: Blessed from the UK

Dear Blessed: The “WEP” provision you refer to is known as the “Windfall Elimination Provision.” It affects anyone who is eligible to collect Social Security benefits, but who also has a pension from another entity (corporation, public agency, or foreign country) which did not participate in the U.S. Social Security program (meaning that SS FICA payroll taxes weren’t paid during that employment). WEP will reduce your U.S. Social Security benefit by using a special formula to compute your benefit amount. Generally, the WEP reduction is determined either by the number of years of substantial Social Security covered earnings that you have, or the WEP maximums (one of which is that your U.S. Social Security can’t be reduced by more than half of your non-covered pension). With less than 20 years paying into the U.S. system, you will incur one of the maximum WEP reductions.

Something else important to understand is that the current estimate you have from Social Security doesn’t include the WEP reduction. That estimate assumes that you will continue to earn at your current level until you reach your full retirement age. You haven’t shared your birthdate, but from your email I assume you are now about 60-years-old. I

f you were born in 1959, your full retirement age (FRA) for U.S. Social Security purposes is 66 years and 10 months (if you were born after that your FRA is 67, and if you were born before that subtract 2 months for each year prior to 1959). Your FRA is when you will get your “full” Social Security benefit. If you claim before that (age 62 is the earliest you can claim) your benefit will be reduced (even before WEP), and if you wait beyond your FRA you’ll earn Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) which will increase your benefit amount. DRCs stop at age 70.

Based upon what you’ve told me, I believe that your WEP reduction will probably be limited to one of the maximums, either half of your monthly U.K. pension, or the maximum for your “eligibility year” (2022?). We don’t yet know what the standard maximum WEP reduction for 2022 will be, but for 2020 it is \$480. That is the most that your Social Security benefit could normally be reduced. But if your U.K. pension is about \$740 U.S. Dollars, then your maximum reduction should be about \$370, because the WEP reduction can’t be more than half of your non-covered (U.K.) pension. So, your U.S. Social Security benefit of \$1,643 will most likely be reduced by about \$370 to about \$1,303. You will need to contact the U.K. pension system to see if any of your U.K. pension will be offset by your U.S. Social Security benefits.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation’s staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

How to submit photos and news to the Barre Gazette

Readers, institutions, municipalities, non-profit groups and civic organizations are strongly encouraged to send the Barre Gazette their hometown news and photos.

News items and press releases should be sent in an e-mail to barrenews@turley.com as either a Microsoft Word document attachment or pasted directly into the e-mail message screen. Be sure to include who, what, when, where and why in the submission, preferably written in the third person unless it is a letter to the editor or guest column.

Please send photo captions identifying all subjects in the image(s) from left to right and include first and last name, hometown, title if applicable, and a brief description of what subjects are doing in the photo.

E-mail uncorrected, raw, RGB color digital photos at highest resolution directly off the camera or sized at least 6 inches wide at 200 resolution, no larger than 1 megabyte.

They may be e-mailed as attachments to barrenews@turley.com or faxed to 413-967-6009. Deadline for hard copy is noon on Friday and e-mailed copy noon on Monday. Publicity chairpersons are encouraged to send in news about upcoming fundraising or other calendar events at least three weeks before they take place.

The Barre Gazette will respond to all e-mail messages received. People may call the Barre Gazette at 413-967-3505 for help and suggestions. People who do not have e-mail may mail these materials to: Ellenor Downer, Editor, Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



In Past Pages

LOOK BACK
Gingerbread Houses - 1995



Turley Publications File Photo

Making gingerbread houses, from left, are Danielle dela Gorgendiere, Amanda Bailey, Wendy Sandman, and her great-grandmother Justine Girouard, age 98, and Valentine Landya.

5 years ago (Dec. 31, 2015)

The Quabbin wrestling team headed out to Milford before the holiday break to take part in the Milford Tournament, and came away with some very good results. At the top of the great results, was Connor Thompson, who finished in first place in the 120-pound weight class.

There were most definitely angels visiting the Hardwick Elementary School last week. More than 30 extra large boxes of food were delivered to the school and then given to the families of many Hardwick Elementary School children to help provide nourishment during the two-week break from school. When schools are closed for weekends and vacations, the families of students that regularly receive free breakfast and lunch often have difficulty providing nutritious meals for their children. Linda Lloyd, executive director of Angels Answers Inc. came to the rescue.

About 50 children in Barre were smiling this Christmas as they received gifts through the Barre Police Association and Marine Corps League South Central Massachusetts Detachment 1094 Toys for Tots. Members of the Barre Police Association wrapped the gifts and filled a cruiser to deliver them just in time for Christmas.

10 years ago (Jan. 6, 2011)

The North Brookfield and David Prouty boys’ varsity basketball teams met for the second time in a week and this time the Indians were able to pull of the victory, 58-57 in double overtime. North

Brookfield junior forward Kevin Kolansky (game-high 16 points) was the hero in the second overtime for the Indians. He scored all four of the Indians points in the second overtime and blocked a shot at the buzzer to preserve the one-point victory.

Quabbin Regional High School senior Chrisoula Duros will hold a special event to raise money for the “Feed the Children” organization, as part of her honors project. Her “Hike to End Hunger” will be held at the East Quabbin Land Trust’s Mandell Hill Trail.

Rutland Police Chief Donald Haapakoski told selectmen that he has chosen Nicholas Monaco as the second sergeant for the police department. Monaco joined the Rutland Police over three years ago coming here from Tinsbury. Monaco is a graduate of the Fulltime Police Academy, Plymouth, and holds both a bachelor’s degree and masters degree from Anna Maria College, Paxton. He also is a qualified EMT.

25 years ago (Jan. 4, 1996)

Four young ladies completed their active years as members of the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls. Ingrid Friberg of Hubbardston, Chrystie Ward of Oakham, Michelle Casey of Hubbardston and Heather Better of Gilbertville joined Barre Assembly No. 114 when they were 12 or 13 years old and remained active members until their 21st birthdays.

Thirteen students at Quabbin Regional High School were selected to play in the Central District Music Festival and 10 of them

received all-state recommendations. They are: Britta Carpenter, trumpet; Sarah Howard, 1st oboe; Ellen Kittredge, French horn; Debbie Luuko, French horn; Rebecca Layton, flute; Chrissy Saari, 1st flute; Toni Musnicki, clarinet; Jason Brown, percussion; Amanda DeSisto, soprano; Amy Bassett, 1st bassoon; Joshua Howard, 1st tuba; Paul Kittredge, trumpet; and Zachary Hamel, bass.

Skiing used to be a family activity with O’Connor family enjoyed each winter for its own sake, but for the last five years as it has been for the last five years it has been not just a winter vacation activity, but their family’s vocation as well. Mark and Jill, and their four sons Corey, 18, Ryan, 16, Patrick, 14, and Aaron, 11 own and run the Pine Ridge Ski Area. Like their parents, the four boys are avid skiers, and also enjoy the new sport of snowboarding. The two oldest boys help in the ski shop, and Corey also works on the ski lift.

38 years ago (Jan. 6, 1983)

Mr. and Mrs. David Cote of Worcester held a surprise birthday party for her grandmother, Mrs. Alice Sinclair of Grandview Terrace, this past Saturday. More than 20 relatives from Auburn, Oxford, Worcester and Spencer and Somers, Conn. Gathered at the Cote home to help Alice celebrate this special occasion. Mrs. Alice Better from Barre was also present.

Lt. and Mrs. John G. Barkman and daughters, Lisa Ann and Pamela from Longmeadow spent the weekend with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Willey of Worcester Road, Barre and her mother, Mrs. Clara Gonsalves of South Street, Barre.

Rev. and Mrs. John W. Taugher and daughters Nancy and Diane, have returned to their home in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, after spending several days visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Herman Stevens and family of Old Coldbrook Road, Barre.

Letter to the Editor

Parish thanks community for help with senior dinner

The Parish of St. Francis of Assisi wishes to extend a giant thank you to the whole community for all those who helped with our “Christmas Dinner for Seniors. Thank you to all for baking, packing, cooking, and delivering. We are pleased to announce that 133 meals were delivered on Sunday, Dec. 20.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
South Barre

Guest column

Adventures of Gertrude the Cat

By Ruth Robinson

Dear folks,

Things are pretty sad around this house today. Missy has been bemoaning the fact that Christmas will not be the same this year without all the little ones running around the house.

In a way, I am glad they won’t be here, but really I will miss them too. They do have a habit of liking to chase me everywhere in the house. No corner seems to be safe. For some reason, the children seem to like to pull my tail or just try to pick me up. You know I don’t stand for that even from Missy.

It all goes back to my experiences in that abusive home many years ago. I try to forget those days, but I do have flash backs now and then even though I have a wonderful life now with Missy.

Last year the children really gave me a bad time. If I went under the bed, they crawled right under too. When I jumped up on the bed, they came up too. I thought I was safe when I went behind the sofa in the living room. But no the littlest one decided to follow me. I got out the other end, but he got stuck and started to scream.

His mother pulled him loose and Missy suddenly saw my plight and called me to follow her. She then opened the cellar door for me to go down cellar out of the way. I was glad to get away from the kids, but the cellar was just a little cold for my old bones and no bed to sleep on.

I used the carpeted stairs near the top where a little heat seeped under the doorframe. I remember after the children and parents left Missy let me out and gave me a big treat for my supper.

This year won’t be like that as only Missy’s daughter and husband will be here for dinner and the day. I expect they will get out the games to play. Perhaps the only good thing for Missy is her presents and the fact she won’t have to cook.

Don’t eat too much folks.
Love,
Gertrude



Turley Publications
Letters to the Editor
Policy

Letters to the editor should be 350 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources. Send letters to: Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005 or via email to edowner@turley.com. The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon.

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Serenity Hill Sampler

by Jane McCauley

This will be the last Serenity Hill Sampler for the year 2020. I hope you all had a safe Christmas and that your new year will be a better one.

Our daughter set up a Zoom account for Christmas so each of the three families stayed home and we viewed each of them opening their presents and saying hi to them. It was a fun experience. We received too many gifts and most were very practical. I will keep the tree up until New Years and then decorate it with Valentines.

I did cook a turkey breast in one of those baking bags and it came out very tender. The day after Christmas I made Ken's favorite cranberry sauce to have with the leftover turkey. Here is the recipe I used.

CHERRIED CRANBERRIES

4 cups cranberries
2 cups sugar
1 cup water
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking powder

Stir together all ingredients well. Put on heat. When mixture comes to a boil cover tightly. Boil slowly for 15 minutes and do not remove the cover. Put in cool place to chill thoroughly. Note: I used the Hubbardston cranberries that Ken picked and I froze. Ken planted the plants in a local bog and many residents are enjoying them. There was a good crop this year.

This and That

Have you thought of any new New Year resolutions? I plan to keep in touch with more of my

friends and relatives. I also plan to finish up some unfinished craft projects. I was given a new one that I have been working on for Christmas.

The girls spent too much money on us for Christmas, but we love everything. I got lots of supplies - watercolor and sewing supplies. They also remembered that I do a lot of printing so cartridges are always welcomed. I also got a lovely winter jacket with a hood and a calendar with family pictures.

My grandson, who is getting his master's degree in forestry and science made me a lovely beech wood cutting board.

May the new year bring all the readers a happy year with good health. The vaccine is coming.

BARRE YIR

continued from page 1

followed the ball. At the March 12 QRSD Committee, Superintendent Sheila Muir said the district stopped all outside trips, domestic and international, stopped use of schools for outside events and staff deep cleaned all building over the past weekend. She said, "Things are changing by the hour, even the minute. At the March 12 meeting, six school districts decided to close schools for varying time periods to do deep cleaning. The next day the Quabbin Regional School joined a long list of schools closed in the Commonwealth. March 16 the Barre Board of Selectmen unanimously declared a local state of emergency due to COVID-19. The action came following similar action on both the state and national level. The public had access to the meeting by broadcast only. The town website said, "As of March 16 all Barre town buildings have been closed to the public and all staff continue to report in to assist the public with their needs through phone, email and mail. QRSD has plans in place to ensure students, who rely on their schools for breakfast and lunch continue to receive that service. Walk-up distribution of daily-prepared meals at selected school sites for families to pick up will be available Monday through Friday until school reopens. With the closing of everything going on around the area and people being advised to stay home as much as possible, the Barre Food Pantry board of directors switched to a smaller group of volunteers and offered drive-thru distribution March 19. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health notified the Barre Emergency Management team of the town's first confirmed COVID-19 case. March 30 on the recommendation of the Barre town clerk postponed the annual town election scheduled for April 6.

April

Sharon Ashleigh said the state legislature passed new provision this week. The first provision would postpone the due date of upcoming taxes. The second provision would delay assessor's exemptions to a later date. Interim town administrator Heather Budewicz said she talked with an assessor and all the assessor's exemptions were in so it did not apply to Barre. The final provision would allow forgiveness of late fees and fines if excise tax, real estate tax and water and sewer bills were paid by June 30. The tax collector she only requested the final provision. Selectmen unanimously approved it. April 10 the Barre Health Center, an affiliate of UMass Memorial Medical

Center, became a testing site for COVID-19. Timothy Clark, manager of ambulatory and procedural services, said the testing site at the health center provided testing in the Barre area so people did not have to travel to Worcester. Although selectmen voted to postpone the annual town election in late March, they did not select a date. At its April 12 meeting, the board voted to hold the annual town election on Tuesday, June 23. The QRSD Food Service Department is distributing breakfast and lunch for all students in the district, age 18 and under. People do not have to attend a Quabbin school to participate. Thursday, April 16 at 3:20 p.m., Rutland Regional Emergency Communication Center receiving numerous calls reporting a building fire at 578 Summer St. in Quabbin Liquors. Firefighters knocked down the fire within 10 minutes. There were no injuries reported. Damage to the building was estimated at \$30,000. QRSD superintendent Muir sent a letter April 21 to students, parents, faculty and staff announcing school would be closed for the remainder of the school year. She said the district would continue to implement the remote learning plan.

May

Labor counsel, Fred Dupere, gave his opinion on employee vacation time during a remote selectmen's meeting May. 4. He said if employees were told that they could not use vacation time they must be given credit for vacation time. It the policy allowed for rolling over vacation time to the next fiscal year, then the employee must be given the opportunity to do that. He said many towns were rolling over vacation time to next year as a one-time situation. A first responder essential workers appreciation vehicle parade was held Saturday, May 16. Interim town administrator Heather Munroe recommended the town file paperwork with the Division of Local Services in case the town meeting didn't happen before June 30. The Barre Farmers' Market opened May 23. Interim town administrator Heather Munroe gave the finance committee an update on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. Due to the pandemic, Barre Post 2 American Legion, the Veterans Service Officer and the town of Barre determined it would be unwise to hold a Memorial Day parade.

June

Saturday, June 6 Quabbin Regional High School Class of 2020 seniors participated in a graduation parade on the weekend the graduation was to be held before the pandemic hit. The graduation ceremony is now scheduled for Friday, Aug. 7. The board of selectmen received notice that interim town

administrator Heather Munroe withdrew her application as a candidate for town administrator. The search committee presented three finalists to the board. Selectman Gregory O'Sullivan said the board needed more discussion before it accepted the finalists. He said one of the finalists did not have all the requested qualifications. He said, "I don't feel [we were] given three qualified candidates and should look at other applications in executive session if necessary." Superintendent Muir said 555 parents returned the survey. She said 48% of parents said the children were spending 2 to 3 hours. She said 29% of parents found parent oversight difficult and students felt there were too many assignments. A 12.59% turnout or 479 of the 3,804 voters went to the polls Tuesday, June 23. They elected Karen Keegan to the Board of Health and Elisha S. Musgraves to a five-year planning board, the only two contests on the ballot. The Barre Board of Selectmen interviewed three candidates for the position of interim town administrator Wednesday, June 24. The board offered the position to Jessica Sizer. Weather caused the postponement of the Annual Town Meeting from Tuesday, June 30 to Tuesday, July 2.

July

A fast moving thunderstorm came through the area July 2nd caused the meeting to be delayed until the rain ended and the sun came out. Moderator Joshua Smith welcomed voters to probably the first ever "al fresco" town meeting in the parking lot of the Quabbin Regional Middle High School. The warrant included a \$5,584,043 town omnibus budget and a \$6,158,958 for the omnibus budget for schools, which included \$5,679,580 for the Quabbin assessment, \$428,358 for Monty Tech assessment and \$51,020 for QRSD debt service. Selectman chair Greg O'Sullivan said he would like the next regular meeting to be held in the meeting room at the Henry Woods Building. Selectman Matthew Urban said his recommendation was to take easy steps. Selectman Dylan Clark said he still didn't feel comfortable spending a long time in room with other people. Selectmen held interviews for five candidates for the position of long-term town administrator July 15 and 16. The board opted to interview again three of the candidates: Sean O'Brien, Evan Kenney and Jessica Sizer July 29.

August

Selectmen offered the permanent town administrator position to Jessica Sizer Aug. 3. They will meet Thursday, Aug. 6 to discuss a contract package with her. Quabbin Regional High School Principal Gregory Devine said at

Where is this?



Turley Publications Photo by Ellenor Downer

This week's mystery photo is from Hubbardston. If any readers know where this photo was taken, they may email edowner@turley.com or call the Barre Gazette at 413-967-3505, extension 100 with their answer by noon on Monday, Jan. 4. The names of those that correctly guessed the location will appear in next week's edition. Dick Clark, Stephen Craven, Bruce Towner and Jeremy Varnum correctly identified the photo. Last week's photo was the solar array at the old Dunroamin Country Club in Gilbertville.

the graduation ceremony Friday, Aug. 27, "[I've] never hosted a graduation like this." Graduates did not process from the school to bleachers. Instead, the graduates wearing masks sat in socially distanced chairs on the front lawn. All administrators, staff and guests wore masks and sat socially distanced in chairs on the lawn. The QRSD Committee approved Superintendent Muir's request to revise the 2020/2021-school calendar. She said the start date would be Tuesday, Sept 8 to allow ten days of training for teachers and staff. Early release days would be changed to Mondays from Wednesdays. There would be no school the entire week of Thanksgiving to allow custodial staff to do deep cleaning of the schools. The QRSD Committee voted to lower their FY 21 budget Thursday, Aug. 13. Of the five-member towns, only Oakham approved at its Annual Town Meeting the amount approved by the school committee following a public hearing. The budget approved March 12 was \$36,023,026. The committee voted to lower that budget by \$1,029,484 that included taking one million dollars from school choice funds and the request of \$29,484 for a new tractor at the middle high school. The new amount was \$34,993,542. After considerable discussion, members of the Barre Lions Club unanimously agreed to cancel the Annual Car Show, which had been scheduled for Sept. 12. The August outdoor meeting also included installation of new officers for 2020/2021. Joe Petracone will serve as president.

September

A 71-year old Barre man was charged with murder Friday, Sept. 4 after shooting a man believed to be his landlord. Roger Leger of 113 Town Farm Road was apprehended at the scene Friday morning and charged with murder and unlawful possession of a fireman. He was arraigned Friday, in East Brookfield District Court before Judge James Haddad. Not guilty pleas were entered on his behalf and he was held without bail. The Barre Lions Club donated face shields to the Barre Police Department and assisted with the installation of lights at Nornay Park. Supt. Muir gave the QRSD Committee an update on the opening of school at the Sept. 17 meeting. She said, [School] opening went well, but was incredibly challenging." She said she was proud of the team. Sarah Latka of Loring Road read a letter at the Sept. 21 board of selectmen's meeting regarding the proposed paving of the road. She said she was

concerned with Barre's paving its gravel roads. In her letter, she said several paved roads in town were in terrible condition such as Town Farm Road and Williamsville Road and the funds should be allocated those roads. Selectmen said they would take a poll of neighbors on Loring Road and discuss at the DPW meeting. Kelly Brown met with selectmen Tuesday, Sept. 22 night to discuss expanding the Green Communities plan to the Ruggles Lane Elementary School. Brown said she met with the school superintendent and Clare Barnes, plants and facilities manager, about adding the elementary school and possibly the middle high school as it is in Barre. The town would be eligible for up to \$200,000.

October

The Harding Allen Bandstand on the Barre Common is getting painted and repaired. Selectmen chair O'Sullivan said the board received letters from 13 addresses with 24 residents supporting paving of Loring Road and more than two opposed. During the Monday, Oct. 5 meeting, the two selectmen presents O'Sullivan and Dylan Clark, heard comments from residents of dirt roads in town. O'Sullivan said the idea of listening tonight to resident comments was to get more information before the DPW meeting Oct. 14. Scarecrows graced the Barre Common this month. The Barre Woman's Club sponsored its second annual scarecrow contest. The QRSD received a grant to hire a consultant to look into regionalization and shared services. The school committee hired the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools to engage area districts on the topic. Then the pandemic came. At the Oct. 15 meeting consultants from MARS participated in a ZOOM meeting with the school committee. At the Oct. 19 meeting, the board of selectmen set the date for a Special Town Meeting for Saturday, Nov. 21. The Christmas in Barre Committee held its annual craft fair Oct. 24 on the Barre Common. Usually, the craft fair is held in the Barre Town Hall in December, but was rescheduled to October so it could be held outside. The first snow of the season arrived Friday, Oct. 30. Snow depth ranged from 2 to 6 inches and it was just a few October snowstorms.

November

The Barre selectmen met remotely Nov. 2 with Dierdre Malone, Strategic Municipal Solutions consultant. She filled in as the town's treasurer/collector for nine weeks while selectmen

sought for a replacement. She made several recommendations in a letter to the board. Unofficial Nov. 3 election results for Barre were for President/Vice President 1,528 for Biden/Harris, 1,524 for Trump/Pence, 18 Hawkins/Walker and 68 Jorgensen/Cohen. For Senator in Congress Edward Markey got 1,548 votes and Kevin O'Connor 1,462 and Representative in Congress James McGovern 1,610 and Tracy Lovvorn 1,487. On the state level for Senator in General Court Anne Gobi got 1,750 votes and Steven Hall 1,346 and for Representative in General Court Donald Berthiaume got 1,863 and Samuel Biagetti 1,194. Registrar of Probate Stephanie Fattman got 1,681 votes and John Dolan 1,125. Question 1 had 2,206 yes and 814 no and question 2 971 yes and 2,105 no. Quabbin Regional High School held its annual Veterans Day ceremony virtually this year on Nov. 10. Barre celebrated Veteran's Day on Nov. 11 at North Common. Barre held an outdoor Special Town Meeting Saturday, Nov. 21 in the parking lot at Quabbin Regional High School. Selectmen unanimously approved the board of assessor's recommendations to continue with the residential factor of one and to not adopt a small business exemption at the Monday, Nov. 30 tax classification hearing.

December

Saturday, Dec. 5 saw a snowstorm. Depths ranged from 6 to 12 inches of snow. A Worcester County Grand Jury indicted a 71-year old Barre man on multiple charges in the Sept. 4 shooting death of his landlord, according to Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr. on Friday, Dec. 18. Robert Leger of 113 Town Farm Road is charged with murder, possession of a fire arm without an FID card, possession of a firearm with a defaced serial number, failure to secure a firearm, possession of ammunition without an FID card and possession of a rifle or shotgun without an FID card. Leger will be arraigned in Worcester Superior Court at a later date. He remains in custody without access to bail. The school committee heard the annual audit review from Powers & Sullivan Thursday, Dec. 10 meeting. Craig Peacock, partner at Powers & Sullivan gave the district an unmodified opinion - a clean opinion, which is the best one can get. The firm conducted the audit mostly remotely about 90%. The Department of Revenue approved the Fiscal 2021 tax rate. The rate approved is \$18 per 41,000 valuation, which is an increase of 13 cents from the Fiscal 2020 tax rate.



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North Brookfield

Dec. 21 North Brookfield School Committee notebook

By Paula Ouimette
Staff writer

Student Council update

Megan Bokis of the Student Council presented her report to the committee. Bokis said the student council made their annual Christmas event drive-through style and handed out cookie decorating kits, treats and had a free raffle of various prizes. Admission to the event was also free. They had over 200 families with children show up, and were able to safely follow all COVID-19 protocols.

Bokis also said for the annual Giving Tree Fundraiser, boxes were set up in the high school for students to donate gifts, which were donated to area children in need. They successfully collected over 100 gifts. Lind said the drive-through was amazing and that the event was a “great job by all of the student council and everybody involved in that.”

School Committee reports

School Committee Chair Maria Tucker said the Massachusetts Association of School Committees is circulating a resolution to ask the state legislature to suspend the MCAS in the spring of 2021. She said the state also needs a federal waiver to suspend the test, like they did last year. Tucker said the president of the North Brookfield Teacher Association communicated to her teachers would like to see the MCAS test suspended.

Tucker said that the expectation that MCAS testing could be held in the spring was unlikely. School Committee member Timothy Canada noted MCAS is a standardized test, and “nothing that is being done in the schools across the state is anything that could be considered standard.”

School Superintendent Richard Lind said there is a two-fold process for suspending MCAS testing, one at the state level and two at the federal level. The School Committee unanimously approved the motion to suspend MCAS and other high-stakes testing.

Financial reports

Lind gave the updated financial

reports. He said spending is on point and that they have been saving some money since summer conferences were virtual, and therefore less costly. He said they are spending more in supplies, but are well within their budget. Lind said they are also doing well with their grant lines.

He shared the budget timeline for fiscal 2022. He will be meeting with administrators to go over what they need. He said they are hoping to be back to school five days a week in person by next September. Lind said the teachers all voted to forego their raises in fiscal 2021, but those increases in salaries will be reflected in the fiscal 2022 budget.

He said it will be a challenging budget. Lind said he plans to give the School Committee a preliminary budget at the January 2021 meeting. He said the budget must be turned into the town by March 1. Tucker said that in the past 15 years, the approved school budget has only increased less than 2 percent. She said that the administration and the teachers have done a wonderful job with what funds they have, but ultimately, they need more. School Committee Secretary Elisabeth Melad agreed with Tucker and added school funding ultimately affects programming.

Regionalization

Lind said the Regionalization Study Committee is in the process of looking at the final report that their consultant provided to them. The three districts they could possibly regionalize with geographically include Quabbin Regional School District, Quaboag Regional School District and Spencer/East Brookfield School District. He said the study committee will determine if it would benefit North Brookfield to regionalize and with what district. He is hoping to have the committee’s recommendation by March 1.

Trip

Lind updated the School Committee about the Washington, D.C. trip and their communication with World Strides, the company that arranges the trip. World Strides had offered to accommodate students that would have attended

the trip in April 2020, in April of 2022. Lind said that all the parents of those students have opted out of that offer. He said some of the parents are taking the trip as a voucher and going April 2021 as a family trip, not a school function. Lind said there have not been a lot of sign-ups for the trip scheduled for April 2021 (now moved to April 2022), for a number of reasons including financial and travel concerns.

Administrators report

Assistant Superintendent Jeanne Powers gave a report about the remote snow day. She said she received a lot of positive feedback on its execution. Powers said the National Honor Society has been working hard to hold their after school movie events. They have had two successful events so far while maintaining COVID protocols.

Elementary School Principal Sarah Priestley talked about “bringing the fun” back to school with spirit week, disco lunches and other events. She said she is so impressed with her staff and how hard they work, and is grateful to have such a “rockstar” staff. She said they will be focusing on revamping the PBIS Academy Initiative they have used in the past to focus on fostering positive behaviors. Priestley also said parent/teacher conferences will be scheduled in February.

Director of Student Services Mark Minucci said Jamie Nason, speech pathologist, and her group is doing a great job delivering their services remotely. He also gave recognition to Eve DiPietro, behavioralist, and Gail Miller, occupational therapist, and Karina Adler, physical therapist.

Tucker commended the school administration and staff, students and families for doing the best they can during this time. Tucker said she is “proud of everybody.” Tucker also thanked the other members of the School Committee for working so well together.

Meeting minutes

School Committee members approved their meeting minutes from the Nov. 16 regular meeting and the Dec. 15 special meeting.

NB SCHOOLS, continued from page 1

February. The School Committee voted in favor of supporting Lind’s decision to postpone basketball. School Committee member Debbie Maggio said she had conflicted feelings about postponing it, as her child enjoyed sports as an outlet in school, but she understood his decision. Tucker said a lot of students are missing out on theater, music and other outlets too.

Learning model update

Lind told the School Committee the district finished the first quarter in mid-November, and he wanted to reflect on the school year so far. Lind said parents/guardians were surveyed to see how the learning model was working for their students and the district received 141 responses. The school district has 393 students in the hybrid model (Cohort A has 205 and Cohort B has 188); 105 students in remote only; and 68 students in-person (4 days a week). The survey covered three main areas: academics, social-emotional needs and communication.

When it came to academics, 30.5 percent of parents/guardians felt their student was performing “similar to previous years.” Lind said he was worried about how students were doing before seeing the survey results, and was “pleasantly surprised” such a large percentage were maintaining their academic level. He also said he was disappointed that so many were struggling (29.8 percent).

Lind said parents/guardians taking the survey were given the opportunity to identify themselves so the district could reach out and see if they could help their student in some way.

MASCOT RETIRED, continued from page 1

are the most vital in this conversation.”

School Committee Timothy Canada said the point of the vote was not to say the logo was “malicious” or point fingers at those defending it, but to just move forward. School Committee member Debbie Maggio asked how they would handle this financially, as far as replacing uniforms. Lind said with the mascot retiring, as uniforms need to be

Almost 30 percent of students spent four or more hours working on their schoolwork during remote learning days. Lind said they are “pretty much where they need to be” in terms of learning times. School Committee member Timothy Canada read a question that was posted in the Zoom chat box, asking if the data was available by grade level to see which grades are struggling more than others. Lind said he has not broken the data down yet, but it will be.

Lind said that 55 percent of parents/guardians supervised their students on remote learning days, and 28.8 percent were completing their work independently. The remaining students were supervised by other adults, older siblings or daycare providers. Lind stated he knew remote learning was “really challenging for parents,” and the school district is always working to make things better for families. He said the survey asked parents what methods at home were most successful for them and their students. Almost 78 percent said having a dedicated workspace for remote learning was important. Following a consistent schedule, having parents/guardians review Google Classroom, having their student attend remote Wednesday sessions and removing distractions all boosted a child’s success, parents said.

Parents/guardians expressed concern about lack of student motivation (60.6 percent), lack of access to teachers (41.7 percent), too many distractions (35.4 percent) and lack of needed resources (36.2 percent). Lind said the district is looking at ways to minimize these concerns the best they can. When it came to the social-emotional health of students, 40.3 per-

cent of those surveyed said they are slightly concerned, 47.5 percent said they are not concerned, and 12.2 percent said they are very concerned. Lind said “it’s a big number...but frankly smaller than I thought,” in regards to those expressing concern for their student’s social emotional state. More than half of the students surveyed said they felt connected to the school community, despite all of the concerns.

Communication between the school district and families received a favorable response from survey-takers.

School Committee Secretary Elisabeth Melad asked Lind how the teachers felt about this. Lind said the teachers are brainstorming in small groups to discuss what is working and what is not. He said they are looking at ways to make things better. Lind referenced the middle school, and how students are now doing “check-ins,” which they are required to share with their parents, to keep everyone on the same page.

Melad said she was curious as to how comfortable teachers felt with the remote learning platform and if there is any way to further support them. Maggio said she would like to see the students broken out by grade to get more accurate results, and to also survey the students if appropriate. She also asked if GPAs had dropped since last fall, and Lind said they did, as did many in the rest of the country. Lind said “it’s really hard” to grade the students work with remote learning due to all the individual challenges students face. Lind said they will be breaking down the survey results by grade level to see where each challenge lies.


replaced, they will be replaced with uniforms that do not have the Indian mascot. He said the mascot will be retired, not erased.

School Committee Vice Chair Ruth Honthumb asked if there was a plan for a new mascot. Lind said they will create a committee to choose a new mascot soon. The committee would include school representatives, students and community members.

Tucker said the Indian mascot appears to have been chosen in 1960, and seems to

represent to many, the friendships and happy memories that people felt during their high school years. Tucker said she understands that, and those memories will not be erased with the retirement of the mascot. Tucker said those who are concerned about the budget and replacing items with the mascot on them should know each one will only be replaced as needed and that it will not affect the budget.

Honthumb made a motion and Melad seconded the motion to retire the mascot.



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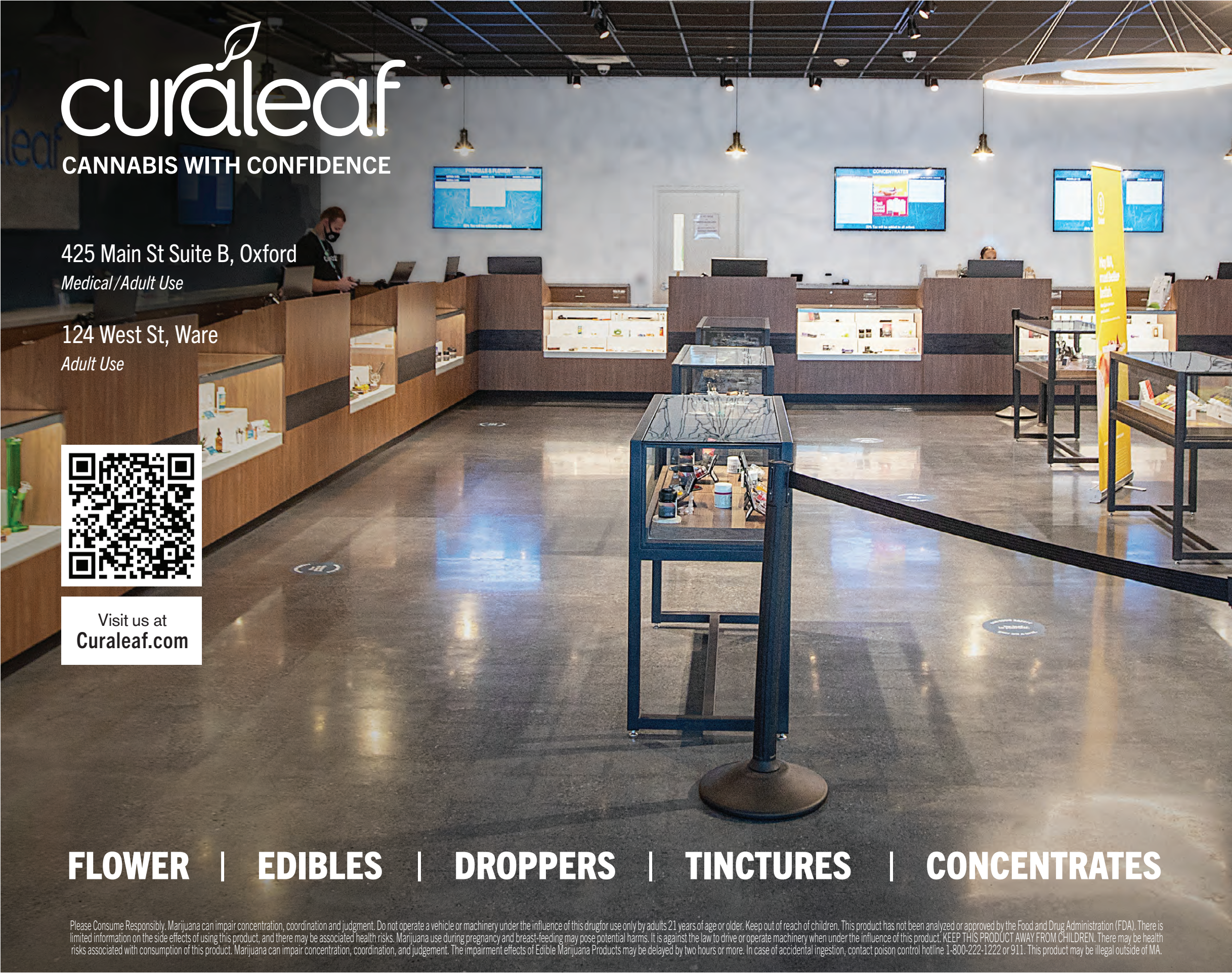
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Quabbin's season set to get underway Jan. 9

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

BARRE – While the Western Mass. region is not beginning to practice until Jan. 11, Quabbin Regional High School, along with several other teams in Central Massachusetts, will hit the ground running with games beginning on that date.

The winter season is set to

run from Jan. 11 to Feb. 21 with boys basketball, girls basketball, swimming, skiing, and ice hockey scheduled to take place.

Quabbin will participate in basketball and ice hockey, though ice hockey is a co-op program with Gardner.

According to Quabbin's recently released modified schedule, the ice hockey co-op will have its first game, a home contest on Saturday,

Jan. 9 at Veterans Rink in Gardner. This year, Quabbin and Gardner will also join forces with Gansett and Murdock for its co-op program. The team will be playing Littleton in its first game at 7:30 p.m.

The basketball teams will follow on Jan. 11 with both teams in action against Gardner at 6 p.m. The girls will play at home while the boys will be at Gardner. The

game time is earlier in order to comply with the governor's "stay-at-home" advisory that goes into effect at 10 p.m. The earlier start time accounts for the visiting team to travel home following the game. Junior varsity contests will begin at 4 p.m. The basketball teams will play on Thursday, Jan. 14 against Gardner with the girls and boys switching locations and ice hockey will play on Saturday, Jan. 16 to

conclude the first week of play.

Practices began on Dec. 14 at Quabbin. Quabbin's schedule pod will include Gardner, Oakmont, Quabbin, Narragansett, Fitchburg and Leominster. Leominster is an addition to the pod while Murdock is no longer part of the pod and ceased playing sports during the fall due to COVID outbreaks. Murdock is located in Winchendon.

Rollback will 'not affect winter sports'

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION – In a statement released last week by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, the rollback plan by Gov. Charlie Baker will not affect winter sports.

Baker's plan decreases capacities in most businesses and other venues, as well as the indoor gathering size being shrunk to just 10 people.

Because of COVID-19 surges that have occurred over the last two months, Baker has strengthened mask mandates, and scaled back business, and has established an attempt at a curfew by closing restaurants at 9:30, shutting down alcohol sales at the same time, and issuing a stay-at-home advisory from 10 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The advisory will likely affect game times for the winter season, but the sports that will be allowed for the winter season will still go on despite the restrictions. It is also possible some of the restrictions will be lifted as the season goes on.

Tara Bennett, director of communications for the MIAA, said the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has been in touch with the MIAA regarding Baker's rollback of the "re-opening" of Massachusetts.

"The office (EEA) confirmed with the MIAA that Gov. Baker's announcement on Dec. 22 of rollbacks on certain sectors will not have an impact on high school athletics."

As a result of that confirmation, no further restrictions will be added to the EEA's release of workplace safety and re-opening standards for businesses and other entities providing youth and adult

Boys field hockey moves forward



File photos

Boys playing field hockey has been a controversial topic over the years, with some believing it has given teams a decided advantage.

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION – This spring, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association Board of Directors will vote on a proposal to start a boys field hockey program.

The rule change has already been approved at the committee level in votes taken earlier this year, and will move on to consid-

eration for adoption.

Field hockey has had its share of controversy over the course of many years as boys are currently allowed to play the sport with girls, the gender that typically dominates the sport.

It's believed boys give many teams a competitive advantage and it has shown in small spurts of improvement among various teams over the years.

Locally, Southwick, South

Hadley, and Holyoke have been among teams that have benefited from having males play over the course of the recent time.

Southwick was a Western Massachusetts Division 1 champion in the mid-1990's with boys playing on the team. The team also enjoyed some success in the early 2000's with boys on the team.

South Hadley was one of few teams that knock off Longmeadow one year in the Western Mass.



Field hockey was played in a 7v7 format due to COVID-19 conditions. A 7v7 format has been proposed for a boys field hockey program.

finals with a pair of boys playing on the team. Holyoke, while having a large number of talented female players, have also had boys on its teams during the past decade.

The addition of boys field hockey has been proposed by Sherry Bryant, the MIAA Associate Executive Director and Field Hockey Committee Liaison. The field hockey committee fully supported the rule.

According to Bryant, the rationale of the rule change is to "to allow the structure of this pathway for boys to be created and available for individual schools and co-op programs as they look to move forward. We recognize that in the absence of viable gender specific programs that all high school players may participate in the current high school field hockey

See FIELD HOCKEY, page 8

See WINTER SPORTS, page 8

Relics able to get through 2020 season



Submitted photos

The Western Mass. Relics, a softball league for senior, had one of the few successful campaigns in 2020 with no cases of coronavirus during its season.

LUDLOW – The Western Mass Relics, which is a Senior Softball League, that's been in existence since 1994, was faced this Spring with the possibility of their season being canceled due to the Coronavirus. With the season questionable and the Relics always concerned for player safety, the Relics worked closely with the Board of Health, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Town of Ludlow and The Fish and Game Club to be one of the few sports leagues in Western Mass to play a full schedule.

The Western Mass Relics had 176 players agree to play and fortunately not one person came down with the Coronavirus.

Among the steps taken to play safely were the following:

- * Temperatures were taken upon arrival. The players had to record a temperature below 100 degrees.

- * Players were required to wear masks in the field.

- * Social distancing was observed when a team was batting. Players brought lawn chairs to accomplish this.

- * There was no tagging out a player. All plays were considered a force play.

- * Handshaking and fist pumps wasn't allowed.

- * Bats were wiped down and

See RELICS, page 8

Athlete signs for college



Submitted photo

Congratulations to Alison Michalik, who signed a letter of intent on Dec. 22 to play field hockey at the University of Saint Joseph in Maine. Michalik is also a student ambassador to the MIAA.

Pioneers to host Pelham clinic in January and February

LUDLOW – Western United Pioneers FC is excited to offer a soccer clinic in Pelham, MA for players in the Massachusetts North Region. The fall clinic provides off-season training and skill development by WUP FC coaches. There are two sessions available. sign up for one or both. It makes a great

holiday gift for friends and family members.

This program is offered to boys and girls born in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The four-week program includes one practice per week for a total of \$65 per session (\$130 for 2 sessions). Sessions will consist of a max of 15 players

per field (COVID regulation for the players' safety).

SESSION 1: MONDAYS 1/11, 1/25, 2/1, & 2/8

Boys and Girls Born 2013 and 2014: Session is at 5 p.m.

Boys and Girls Born 2010, 2011, and 2012: Session is at 6 p.m.

SESSION 2: MONDAYS 2/22,

3/1, 3/8, & 3/15

Boys and Girls Born 2013 and 2014: Session is at 5 p.m.

Boys and Girls Born 2010, 2011, and 2012: Session is at 6 p.m.

The sessions will be held at Pelham Elementary School at 45 Amherst Road, Pelham, MA 01002.

Hall of Fame announces eligible candidates for the Class of 2021

Hall of Fame planning two separate enshrinement ceremonies in 2021

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame today announced the list of eligible candidates for the Class of 2021, including first-time nominees Doug Collins, Michael Cooper, Howard Garfinkel, Lou Henson, Paul Pierce, Val Ackerman, Yolanda Griffith and Lauren Jackson.

Returning to the ballot are fan-favorite nominees Chauncey Billups, Chris Bosh, Richard Hamilton, Bob Huggins, Ben Wallace, Chris Webber, Jay Wright, Swin Cash and Becky Hammon among others.

A first look at the list of eligible nominees was provided by The Jump on ESPN, hosted by Rachel Nichols, and Class of 2021 nominee Paul Pierce. A complete list of eligible candidates can be found attached.

Following the Hall of Fame's traditional timeline, Finalists from

the North American and Women's committee for the Class of 2021 will be announced in the timeframe of NBA All-Star Weekend, which is scheduled for early March. The entire Class of 2021, including those selected by the direct elect committees, will be unveiled in the timeframe of the NCAA Final Four scheduled for early April. Event details are forthcoming, and the announcement timeline is subject to change.

The Class of 2021 Enshrinement ceremony is scheduled to take place in Springfield, Mass., in September 2021. As previously announced, the Class of 2020 Enshrinement ceremony has been rescheduled and relocated due to COVID-19 and is scheduled for May 13-15, 2021 at Mohegan Sun.

Tickets for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2020 and 2021 Enshrinement ceremonies and various events surrounding the ceremonies will be on-sale at a later date. For the latest news and updates, follow @hoophall on Twitter and Instagram.

Church News

Local pastor offers sermon

2020 - End of Year Review

This is the final publication of 2020 and what a year it has been. In fact, the more I reflect upon 2020 the more I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of what we have collectively experienced. Before we move into the New Year, perhaps it would be beneficial to look back in a spirit of introspection.

1) High Points

What were your high points in 2020? Do any positive, memorable moments stand out in your recollection?

Perhaps your high point revolved around an answered prayer. After all, Scripture affirms that God responds to the prayers of His people (Matt. 7:7-8): “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Perhaps your high point revolved around some personal achievement. Was 2020 the year in which you were promoted at work, completed your education, or surpassed some key milestone in life and living (e.g., birthday, anniversary, etc.)? In what way(s) have you advanced throughout the year?

Perhaps it revolved around personal relationships or moments with those you love. This may seem strange in the era of social isolation, but maybe 2020 was the year you came to realize the importance of human connection. There is nothing like healthful companionship.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

What is the rightful response to your high point? In other words, what should you do in light of the blessing you have experienced? Firstly, recognize that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down” from our heavenly Father (James 1:17). Secondly, take the time to offer thanks and praise to the Lord in kind. Let us follow the example of the ancient psalmist:

Psalms 103:1-5

1 Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

2 Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,

5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

2) Low Points

Of course, life can also be full of difficulty and adverse circumstance. Christ spoke clearly to this reality:

John 16:33

“In this world you will have trouble . . .”

What was your low moment in 2020? What trial or tribulation were you made to endure?

Perhaps your low point revolved around a seemingly unanswered prayer. There are moments in life wherein we pray, and heaven seems to have no response (or not the response we wanted). Sometimes the Lord loves us enough to say, “No.” This can be jarring for even the most faithful of believers.

Perhaps your low point revolved around personal connections with friends and family (i.e., or the lack thereof). 2020 has been

challenging in terms of social distancing and the absence of human interaction. Has this made you feel alone or isolated? Has this made your relationships sour at all?

Perhaps 2020 was the year in which you experienced an unexpected setback. Did you lose your job, your business, your health, a loved one, etc.? Many have had their dreams shattered, leaving them feeling hollowed out and hopeless. Is this true, in any way or to any degree, of you?

What is the rightful response to your low point of 2020? What should you do in light of the challenges you have had to face? Though I cannot offer an exhaustive response in so short a space, allow me to note the following: a) cast your cares upon the Lord; b) consider the reality of His presence and power; and c) respond to His offer of comfort divine. May these accompanying passages speak to your heart:

1 Peter 5:6-7

6 . . . humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. John 16:33b (Jesus Speaking)

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Matthew 11:28-29 (Jesus Speaking)

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

May the Lord bless you as we enter 2021! Thank you for taking the time to read this publication. Feel free to check us out online at www.NewLifeBarre.org or visit us in person each Sunday at 10:30am (COVID-19 protocols are presented on the aforementioned website). We hope to see you soon!

Pastor James Foley

*New Life Assembly of God
South Barre*

Tri-Parish Community Church news

NEW BRAINTREE — “We heard the bells on Christmas Eve, their old, familiar carols play...” In this case, it was the organ playing at the Tri-Parish Community Church in Hardwick on Christmas Eve. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, singing aloud has been banned; but through the talents of organist, Deborah

Kent, those carols resounded both inside and outside the church. The organ has been quiet for quite some time with no one to play it. The service led by Jennifer Pollard was much appreciated in these trying times.

The 10 a.m. service on Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021 will begin four months of worship-

ping at the New Braintree Congregational Church. All are welcome. The Tri-Parish Community Church will meet via Zoom at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021. Anyone wishing to participate, should sent contact information to: triparishcc@gmail.com.

USDA announces 2021 application ranking dates for conservation programs

AMHERST – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service encourages people, who own farm or forest land, to sign up for conservation assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance program. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year; however, the next ranking batching date will be Friday, Jan. 15, 2021.

The Jan. 15 batching period will fund Conservation Activity Plans through EQIP, with future batching periods offering assistance in other funding pools for both programs. A funding pool is an amount of money that NRCS has set aside for special categories of applications. Each funding pool has its own ranking criteria and applicants will compete only with other applicants in that specific pool.

Farmers and forest landowners can use CAPs to address specific natural resource objectives such as nutrient and pest management, forestry, energy conservation, or transitioning to organic agriculture. EQIP participants who receive financial assistance for a CAP will work with a technical service provider to develop the plan. The participant chooses a TSP from an NRCS-approved list at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp/>.

People may apply for NRCS conservation programs at any

time; complete applications are ranked for funding in batches periodically throughout the year. All applications determined eligible and high priority by close of business on the ranking date will be considered in the current funding cycle.

The following application ranking dates for 2021, pending available funds, are scheduled: Feb. 19, March 19, April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16 and Aug. 20.

Ranking dates and the application process are subject to change. Contact your local field office for the latest information. For more information on available programs, the application process, and natural resource priorities, visit the Massachusetts NRCS website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

“If you operate a farm or manage forest land and want to improve your land, we can help,” said Dan Wright, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. “You can discuss your vision for your land with one of our conservation planners, who will explain the conservation planning process and how to apply for financial assistance.”

EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and forest land owners to address natural resource concerns through an array of conservation practices. Assistance is available to support private landowners and managers in addressing farm,

field, forest, wildlife, water, and/or plant management issues including: erosion control, farm and forestry conservation plans, fencing for grazing systems, forest stand improvement, grazing plans, irrigation systems, pasture and hayland planting, pollinator habitat, protection of heavy use areas for livestock restoration and management of declining habitat, riparian buffers, seasonal high tunnels, soil health management plans, waste storage facilities and wildlife habitat management and development.

The AMA program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. Massachusetts producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures and implement high tunnels to benefit plant productivity.

AMA is available in 16 states where Federal Crop Insurance Program participation is historically low: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

For more information, people may contact their local USDA-NRCS office: Greenfield field office at 413-772-0384, extension 3, serving Franklin County;

Hadley field office at 413-585-1000, extension 3, serving Hampden and Hampshire Counties; Holden field office at 508-829-4477, extension 3, serving Worcester County; Pittsfield field office at 413-443-1776, extension 3, serving Berkshire County; Westford field office at 978-692-1904, extension 3, serving Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk Counties;

Wareham field office at 508-295-5151, extension 2, serving Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth Counties and West Yarmouth field office at 508-771-6476, serving Cape Cod and the Islands.

Some of the EQIP funding will be provided to farmers and forest landowners via the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which encourages partner organizations to join in efforts with producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales. Through the RCPP program, NRCS and its partners help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits achieved.

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with conservation districts and the people of Massachusetts to improve and protect soil, water and other natural resources.

Obituaries

Steven P. Kane, 66

NEW BRAINTREE – Steven P. Kane, 66, passed away on Monday, Dec. 21, 2020, at Quaboag on the Common after an illness. He was born in Worcester, the son of the late Paul B. Kane and had lived in New Braintree since 1967.

Steven leaves his mother, Irene Kane; his brothers, Richard and Paul Kane, all of New Braintree; and his nieces and his nephew. Steven was a quiet, unassuming gentleman who loved to talk about history. He was a published author and contributed to numerous articles over the years. He was known for his knowledge of World War II, with special interest in the Battle of the Bulge.

Services are private and will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to your favorite animal shelter. Arrangements are under the care of the Miles Funeral Home, 1158 Main Street, Holden.

To share a memory or offer an online condolence, please visit www.milesfuneralhome.com

DEATH NOTICE

Kane, Steven P.
Died: Dec. 21, 2020
Services are private

AARP lists monthly scam alert

Did you know that someone’s identity gets stolen every two seconds? The AARP Fraud Watch Network provides you with tips and resources to help you spot and avoid identity theft and fraud so you can protect yourself and your family. Popular scams for December include the following:

Making your home cyber secure

With nine in ten U.S. adults online these days for work, finances, shopping or entertainment, criminals have many opportunities to steal money or sensitive personal information. When you factor in the many devices in our homes linked to the internet – computers, gaming systems, TVs, smartphones – the opportunities grow.

To keep your home network safe from criminals, follow these three home security rules. Keep the operating systems, web browsers and security software on all of your connected devices updated. If your internet router has the same name and password it came with, change both. And engage your firewall – your operating system or antivirus software should come with a firewall that guards your system from uninvited sources; make sure yours is turned on.

Facebook Marketplace

The holidays are getting close and many of us are looking for those last-minute deals. One place people are turning to is Facebook Marketplace, but beware because scammers are lurking. The spike in online shopping has unfortunately led many victims right to the criminals who offer deals too good to pass up.

This fall, the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline has received a high volume of calls from people losing money to scams on Facebook Marketplace. Here are some tips to avoid online sales scams. Before making that purchase, research what similar items are selling for elsewhere. The greater the deal, the greater the likelihood that it could be a scam. Buy local versus having something shipped, and arrange to meet in a public space. Pay cash – if asked to pay by a payment app, wire transfer or gift card, refuse. Finally, if you need to get an item shipped, use a credit card, which has fraud protections.

Gift card scams

According to a recent AARP survey, more than 2/3 of US consumers will purchase a gift card for someone this holiday season. While these gifts are easy to give and popular to get, they are also open to fraud. The same survey found that one in three people have either given or received a gift card with no funds on it. Remember these tips whenever buying gift cards.

If buying from a store rack, inspect the card before purchase to make sure that the packaging

hasn’t been tampered with and that the code hasn’t been revealed. Better yet, buy gift cards online directly from the retailer, restaurant or other issuer. Be wary of buying from gift card resellers – if you do, make sure they offer a guarantee.

Perr-to-peer payment apps

In the time of COVID, peer-to-peer payment apps have become more popular than ever. According to a recent AARP survey on online holiday shopping, more than half of US adults plan to use a peer-to-peer payment app for gift purchases. It’s important to know that some apps are safer than others.

PayPal, for example, is set up for users to make purchases with businesses where it’s offered. But other popular payment apps like Venmo, Zelle and Cash App, are intended for use among friends and family – to split a dinner bill or pay the babysitter. Fraud losses are generally not recoverable when you use these apps to pay for a product that never comes. To protect your assets, remember that using cash or a credit card, which comes with fraud protections, are still your best bets.

COVID health scams

2020 has been one for the record books and it looks like we will end it in much the way we spent it – trying to beat back the virus. One thing to remember is that while most of us are trying to keep our loved ones safe, scammers are trying to make things worse. During 2020 more than a quarter million people have fallen victim to COVID-related scams, many promising miracle cures, test kits or vaccines.

Remember whenever the virus is spreading, tests are hard to come by, or a vaccine is close, scammers will be lurking. Look to your health care provider or state and local health department for information on the virus, testing or vaccine availability and never give out your health care account numbers or personal financial information to people you don’t already know and trust.

Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 1-877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraud-watchnetwork.

Barre Gazette

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$100, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.



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Public Safety

Barre Police Log

Sunday, Dec. 20 6:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident Wauwinet Road – Vehicle Towed	Refusal	Thursday, Dec. 24 8:56 a.m. 911 Hang-up/Misdial/ Abandoned/Silent West Street – Arrest(s) Made Arrest: Dennis M. Riley, 44, West Brookfield Fugitive From Justice 11:54 a.m. Safety Concerns Worcester Road – Area Search Negative
Monday, Dec. 21 6:32 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Worcester Road – Ambulance Signed Refusal 7:10 p.m. Welfare Check North Brookfield Road – Ambulance Signed	Tuesday, Dec. 22 7:07 a.m. Fire, Medical Emergency West Street – Transported to Hospital 12:05 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident Summer Street – Investigated 6:30 p.m. Assault South Street – Report Filed	

Hubbardston Police Log

Sunday, Dec. 20 7:37 a.m. Serve Warrant Gardner Road – Prisoner Bailed Arrest: Olivia A. Seminoff, 41, Hubbardston Warrant 12:01 p.m. Illegal Dumping Elm Street – Officer Spoke to Party	3 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident Gardner Road – Vehicle Towed	Simond Hill Road – Transported by Life Flight
	Wednesday, Dec. 23 1:10 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Old Boston Turnpike – Transported to Hospital 4:14 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency	Saturday, Dec. 26 9:32 p.m. Officer Wanted Simond Hill Road – Unfounded

Oakham Police Log

Sunday, Dec. 20 4:34 p.m. Motor Vehicle Suspicious Old Turnpike Road – Vehicle Removed	License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With	Brookfield Road – Citation Issued 5:15 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued 5:39 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued 8:45 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued
Monday, Dec. 21 11:14 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Worcester Road – Criminal Complaint Summons; Kaci M. Holbrook, 30, Orange	Thursday, Dec. 24 9:03 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Barre Road – Transported to Hospital	
	Saturday, Dec. 26 5:03 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North	

Rutland Police Log

Sunday, Dec. 20 12:05 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Miles Road – No Fire Service Necessary 5:46 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Wachusett Street – Transported to Hospital	9:12 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Citation Issued 10:58 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Barre Paxton Road – Written Warning 11:24 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Written Warning 1:27 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Maple Avenue – Written Warning 1:46 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Maple Avenue – Citation Issued 2:05 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Criminal Complaint Summons: Alayna M. Paquin, 28, Worcester Unlicensed Operation of Motor Vehicle; Speeding Rate of Speed Exceeding Posted Limit 6:11 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Wachusett Street – Transported to Hospital 7:17 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Blair Drive – Services Rendered	7:48 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Criminal Complaint Summons: Scott A. Menard, 58, Sturbridge License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With, Subsequent Offense; Inspection/Sticker, No 11:48 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop East County Road – Written Warning 11:59 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Barre Paxton Road – Criminal Complaint Summons: Corey M. Burke, 32, Revere License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With 5:59 p.m. Larceny Inwood Road – Officer Spoke to Party
Monday, Dec. 21 11:46 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Pleasantdale Road – Written Warning 3:41 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Maple Avenue – Written Warning 5:32 p.m. Fraud Main Street – Information Taken	Tuesday, Dec. 22 12:59 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Written Warning 8:45 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Vehicle Towed Summons: Robert B. Whyte, 54, Oakham Registration Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With; Inspection/Sticker, No	Thursday, Dec. 24 12 a.m. Animal Wildlife Barre Paxton Road – Removed Hazard 9:45 a.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Maple Avenue – Transported to Hospital 9:03 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Barre Road – Transported to Hospital

3

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AARP reports on COVID-19 in nursing homes

BOSTON – COVID-19 cases and deaths in Massachusetts nursing homes continued to skyrocket through the Thanksgiving surge, according to a new special report by AARP’s Public Policy Institute, issued as a supplement to the organization’s monthly Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard.

In the weeks analyzed by AARP, November 16 to December 6, Massachusetts nursing homes experienced:

- .59 COVID-19 deaths per 4 weeks per 100 residents, up from .18 between Oct. 19 and Nov. 15
- 4.9 new COVID-19 cases per 4 weeks per 100 residents, up from 1.5 between Oct.19 and Nov. 15
- 4.8 new staff COVID-19 cases per 4 weeks per 100 residents, up from 2.0 between Oct. 19 and Nov. 15

This rapid increase in nursing home deaths and cases in these last three weeks is on top of the trend identified in the AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard that reported data through November 15.

“Public health experts had warned Americans that cases would increase as families traveled and visited each other over Thanksgiving, and the reported numbers have proved these warnings correct,” said Mike Festa,

AARP Massachusetts Director. “The continued increase of community spread is taking a devastating toll on nursing home residents and staff.”

Nationally, the rate of nursing home resident deaths, cases, and staff cases have each more than tripled in just seven weeks. Deaths and cases continue to surge, with the most recent week being the highest of all.

“As coronavirus cases continue to surge, and with the holiday season upon us, nursing home residents are in grave danger,” said Festa. “ Our state leaders must act now to save lives.”

AARP continues to call on Massachusetts leaders to better protect residents and staff of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities from COVID-19 by:

·Prioritizing regular and ongoing testing and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for residents and staff—as well as inspectors and any visitors.

·Improving transparency on daily, public reporting of cases and deaths in facilities; communication with families about discharges and transfers; and accountability for state and federal funding that goes to facilities.

·Requiring access to virtual visitation for all residents, and ensure

access to in-person visitation following federal and state guidelines for safety.

·Ensuring quality care for residents through adequate staffing, oversight, and access to in-person formal advocates, called long-term care Ombudsmen.

·Rejecting immunity for long-term care facilities related to COVID-19.

Federal officials have urged nursing home and long-term care residents, staff, and their loved ones to “exercise extreme caution” during the holiday season.

The AARP special report includes national and state data, and serves as a supplement to the AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard, released monthly.

Using data released by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services—which is self-reported by nursing homes—the AARP Public Policy Institute, in collaboration with the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University in Ohio, created the AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard to provide four-week snapshots of the virus’ infiltration into nursing homes and impact on nursing home residents and staff. The dashboard will continue to be updated every four weeks. The complete dashboard is available at aarp.org/nursinghomedashboard.

Big Y offers employees bonus

SPRINGFIELD – As part of their continued appreciation for their extraordinary efforts this past year, Big Y has announced that they will be paying additional holiday bonuses to their front line and distribution center associates including full time, part time and casual employees.

This holiday bonus is part of the company’s ongoing recognition and appreciation for the efforts and sacrifices of employees, which was instituted last March. Thank you bonuses are expected to continue during the first part of 2021.

“We continue to be grateful to all of our employees for their valiant

efforts throughout this pandemic. They have all taken their role as essential workers both nobly and carefully in order to continue to provide for and support our friends and neighbors in our communities,” says Charles L. D’Amour, president and CEO. “I am so very proud of their resilience and dedication to serving our customers during this past year. This bonus pay is just one way that we show our appreciation to our team of 12,000 who work so hard and tirelessly every day.”

Big Y Foods, Inc. is one of the largest independently owned supermarket chains in New England. Big Y operates 85 locations through-

out Massachusetts and Connecticut including 71 supermarkets, Fresh Acres Market, Table & Vine Fine Wines and Liquors and 12 Big Y Express gas and convenience locations with almost 12,000 employees. Big Y has been recognized by Forbes as a Best-in-State Employer in Massachusetts and Connecticut, as well as 2018 Employer of Choice by the Employers Association of the

Northeast. Founded in 1936 by brothers Paul and Gerald D’Amour, the store was named after an intersection in Chicopee, Massachusetts where two roads converge to form a “Y.”

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